

From: RevMarge
Subject: JGrifGa@aol.com: Fwd: Prayers for Sister Church
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HOMOSEXUALITY
AND SOUTHERN
BAPTISTS

Wednesday night at church conference, Oakhurst took an important and historic step - a step which will likely lead to our church's exclusion from the Georgia Baptist Convention(GBC). We unanimously voted to send a thoughtful and well-written response to the GBC in response to their recent letter threatening to oust us for our welcoming and affirming stance toward homosexuals.

Background

After the GBC at its November convention acted negatively toward churches open to gays and lesbians, Oakhurst sent a public statement which was printed in the Christian Index (the GBC newspaper) in December. It said, "Human sexuality is a gift of God to be accepted with gratitude and expressed responsibly." Although Oakhurst was never mentioned by name in discussions on the convention floor, it was widely known that Oakhurst would likely be targeted.

Then our pastor, Lanny Peters, received a letter from the Executive Director of the GBC. Mind you, this was a letter not to the church, but to Lanny. (Oh, how incorrect GBC was to think that at Oakhurst the pastor speaks for the congregation!)

The letter said in short:

I am sure that you are aware that the GBC approved action in the November 1998 annual meeting which amended our Constitution to exclude any church which "knowingly takes or has taken any action to affirm, approve, or endorse homosexual behavior". The letter goes on to say that the Executive Committee has asked him to communicate with you (Lanny) "regarding the position of Oakhurst Baptist Church concerning endorsing, affirming, or approving the homosexual lifestyle".

Oakhurst's action

After much discernment and discussion (which is the typical Oakhurst style), at a regular Wednesday night church conference (6/16) with about 40 people attending, a letter was presented. It had been drafted (and redrafted and redrafted) by a task force representative of the Oakhurst members. The letter was unanimously approved and will be sent as a congregational response to the GBC.

The letter says that Oakhurst is "a welcoming and affirming place in which lesbian and gay Christians are embraced as full members of our congregation". It also states that "the ministry that lesbian and gay Christians offer so joyfully to our church is a blessing and a crucial part of the life of this congregation".

The Oakhurst covenant

In all of our statements, letters, and communications with the world, we at Oakhurst liberally quote from our wonderful covenant - "that in this fellowship we are one in Christ Jesus." And, "Therefore we reject any status in this fellowship in terms of church office, possessions, education, race, age, gender, sexual orientation, mental ability, physical ability, or other distinctions."

I just thought that you might like to hear of this bold and decisive Oakhurst action - which will likely lead to our being disfellowed at the next GBC convention. I am sad for the many Baptist (Georgia and otherwise) who just don't get it about the church being an inclusive place for all of God's creations.

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Young
Adults

Homosexuality and
Southern Baptists

Com

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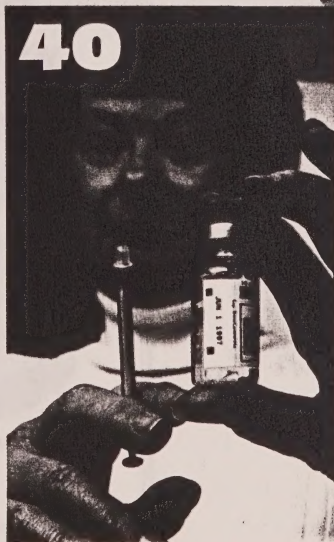
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Kevin Menck

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January 31

Offering Hope to Homosexuals



Day-By-Day

Monday

Leviticus 18:22

How does this verse does apply today?

Tuesday

Romans 1:21-25

Although God is certainly able to deliver from "sinful desires," He desires that we ask for His help.

Wednesday

Romans 1:26-28

Note the progressive, malignant nature of sin—any type of sin.

Thursday

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Contrast *steal, commit sexual immorality, and get drunk* with *washed, sanctified, and justified*.

Friday

1 Corinthians 6:18-20

What price did God pay for your life? What do you owe Him in return?

Saturday

1 Peter 1:13-16

When God commands, He also enables. Can God describe you as an obedient child?

Prayer Concerns for This Week

Leviticus

18:22;

Romans

1:24-28;

1 Corinthians

6:9-11, 18-20

Background Scripture

Lesson Bible Truth

Life Outcome

Life Question

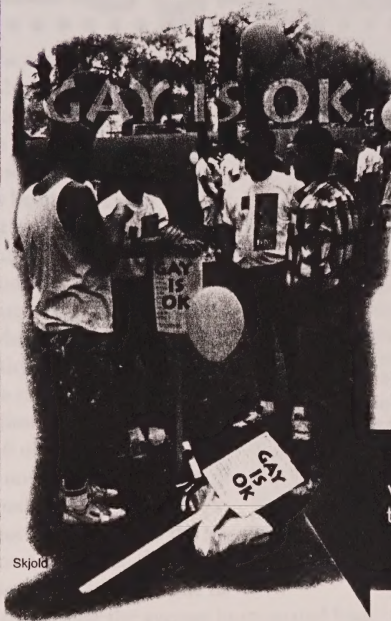
What should my attitude be about homosexuality and homosexuals?

Homosexuality: An Inacceptable Lifestyle

Homosexuality: A Sinful Lifestyle

What Will Happen to Those Who Do Not Turn Back to God?

Q Do you object to homosexuality on a personal level or a spiritual level? Do you react as strongly to other sins?



Q As the author of sexuality, would you expect God to know how best it fits into human lives?

Q If homosexuality continues to gain widespread acceptance, how long will it be before tolerance for other sexual perversions will be urged on us as a society?

Christians and non-Christians are struggling with their beliefs and attitudes concerning homosexuality. What should we believe about homosexuals and homosexuality? This Bible study provides a biblical answer to the question, What should my attitude be about homosexuality and homosexuals? **Q**

Homosexuality Is Not an Acceptable Lifestyle (Lev. 18:22; Rom 1:24-25)

²²“ ‘Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.’ ”

Romans 1:

²⁴Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. ²⁵They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

In Leviticus 18—26 the phrase “I am the Lord” is used 42 times. God proclaims His authority over humankind.

Although some people in society want us to *believe* these words are true, God's Word *is* true and rejects this false statement.

Human action should not be determined by popular opinion but by moral absolutes stated in the un-

changing revelation of the Bible. God invented sex. His authority gives Him every right to establish standards and expect obedience. Yet God's laws are largely ignored. Our world is saturated with the blatant misuse of sexuality. **Q**

God ordained sexual roles for both men and women. Leviticus 18 catalogs sexual relationships that trespass God's laws. Homosexuality is clearly listed as **detestable** (v. 22). Our culture teaches tolerance and acceptance; however, believers must evaluate cultural opinion based on God's Word. Although some people argue that homosexuality is simply an alternative lifestyle, the Bible is very clear that only male-female sexual relationships are acceptable. **Q**

Romans 1:24 states, **Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts.** Paul reinforced this

homosexuality

truth by using the words **gave them over** three times (vv. 24-28). God gave people the absolute right to choose their own courses of action and the freedom to live with the consequences. God's wrath, Paul taught, was being dispensed in ways many would not recognize. God allowed sinful choices and their consequences to permeate a person's life.

Current research shows that the homosexual lifestyle often encompasses sexual promiscuity, bizarre sexual practices, and a wide range of diseases that are directly attributed to these practices. A study of 5,246 obituaries in homosexual newspapers revealed that the average age of homosexual men dying of AIDS was 39. Even more revealing was the average age of homosexual men dying from other causes—41. Studies done in the mid-1980s found that the average homosexual had between 20 to 106 different partners per year—300 to 500 in a lifetime. The homosexual lifestyle represents emotional instability, potential for disease, loneliness, and isolation. **Q**

Christians are to affirm that homosexuality is an ungodly lifestyle that is incompatible with biblical teaching. One answer to the question, What should my attitude be about homosexuality and homosexuals? is that homosexuality is not an acceptable lifestyle in God's eyes.

Homosexuality Is Unnatural (Rom. 1:26-28)

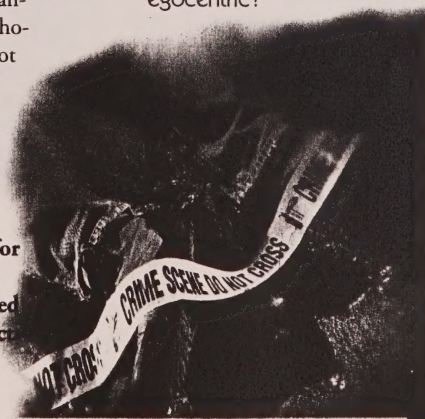
²⁶Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. ²⁷In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

Homosexuality is frequently defined as sexual preference for or sexual behavior among people of the same sex. The Bible commends sexual relations between a man and woman who are married to each other as part of God's design; all other sexual activity the Bible condemns as sinful.

Unlike many people today, the Bible does not distinguish between behavior and orientation. Nor does the Bible recognize homosexuality as genetic. The Bible views homosexuals as people who rebel against God by choosing ways other than His way. Therefore, homosexuals are responsible for their sinfulness and need to be made aware of their need for redemption. God's people should respond to homosexuals with Christian compassion and God's redemptive plan as expressed in the gospel.

Source: "Homosexuality" in *Holman Bible Dictionary*

Is a lifestyle built around personal gratification going to be characterized by sincere, unselfish commitment? Can heterosexual relationships also be selfishly egocentric?



Murder is unnatural and perverts God's gift of life; homosexuality is unnatural and perverts God's gift of sex.

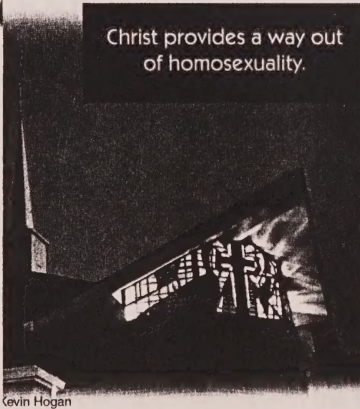
Christians are to affirm that homosexuality is an ungodly lifestyle that is incompatible with biblical teaching.

Q⁵ What are some of the benefits we obtain by living according to God's natural order

- Physically?
- Emotionally?
- Mentally?
- Spiritually?

Q⁶ Do you agree with the homosexual argument "God made me this way"? Why, or why not?

Christ provides a way out of homosexuality.



²⁸Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.

The Scripture does not support the popular assertion that people are born homosexual. The Bible states that all are born with a sinful nature. Our nature can be changed only through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This is the hope of our salvation. Homosexuality, like all sin, goes against God's natural order. Homosexuality is unnatural. Sexual relations between same-sex partners is perverse and depraved. **Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind** (v. 28). Paul pointed out that a person who is out of touch with God is out of touch with reality. God's reality is the truth about humanity, which includes sexual identity. Finding sexual identity in God's plan leads to the resolution of internal conflict. **Q⁵**

God created a natural order. Homosexuality opposes that order. I have met men and women who have agonized over their homosexual feelings. I have met believers who were entrapped by the homosexual lifestyle. I have counseled children who were traumatized by abusive homosexual adults. In my experience as a counselor, I have seen little correlation between the trauma of homosexuality and the happy, satisfied homosexual lifestyle depicted by the media.

God's Word teaches that homosexuality is an unnatural, perverse lifestyle that has profoundly destructive spiritual, psychological, and social consequences. In addition to homosexuality's not being an acceptable lifestyle, a second answer to the question, What should my attitude be about homosexuality and homosexuals? is that homosexuality is unnatural. **Q⁶**

Christ Provides a Way out of Homosexuality (1 Cor. 6:9-11)

"Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders ¹⁰nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

First Corinthians 6:9-10 reads like a roll call for the disinherited. What a hopeless state of affairs if that were the end of the story! Paul wrote some of the most hopeful words of the gospel when he stated, **And that is what some of you were** (v. 11). He used the past tense to describe sin. God offers liberation from sin! Paul described what happened to the Corinthians he was addressing: they were **washed, sanctified, and justified** (v. 11). The Corinthians had experienced the cleansing of God. Some of the Corinthians had practiced homosexuality, but they had been forgiven. Christians are reminded that God can and will forgive all sin. People can be delivered from homosexuality. **Q**

Mary shared her desire to break free of lesbianism. She and I worked together in therapy for several months. During a difficult session, she began to weep uncontrollably. Mary placed her hands over her face and refused to look at me. She was deeply ashamed!

She said, "I don't think that anyone can accept me now! My sin is too great!" In that moment, I realized that it was not my acceptance she needed. Mary needed to experience the forgiveness and acceptance of Christ. **Q**

I said, "Mary, I want you to know that Jesus accepts you and has forgiven you and so have I." She had the courage to remove her hands. As Mary looked at me, I prayed, "Oh,

Q Does it surprise you to see drunkards, cheaters, and the greedy mixed in with adulterers and homosexuals in these verses? Why? How does God view sin?

Q Do you know in your heart that God's grace is measureless and that no sin is beyond His capacity to forgive?

On Wings Like Eagles

This 52-minute video chronicles the life of Michael Johnston. His is a powerfully gripping story of the deep human desire for love and acceptance, the struggle between right and wrong, hope and despair—a story of forgiveness and grace, and ultimately of prophetic warning. *On Wings Like Eagles* is a witness for truth and teaches profoundly valuable lessons. This video imparts a uniquely authoritative understanding of one of the most explosive issues of our time and provides hope for anyone struggling with the sin of homosexuality. In commenting on this video D. James Kennedy has

stated: "Michael Johnston's story gives convincing evidence that Christ provides hope for those who feel trapped by homosexual desire. His life, struggle and victory over astonishing obstacles exposes the lie behind homosexual propaganda that says they are born that way and cannot change. *On Wings Like Eagles* is a message of hope in the midst of the storm." You may order a copy of this video by calling 1-800-548-5630.



People need to know that homosexuals can be forgiven, cleansed, and delivered from a lifestyle of homosexuality through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Q⁹ How can you convey assurance of forgiveness to those who need to hear it?

Q¹⁰ Should believers demand acceptance for a Christian lifestyle as many homosexuals demand acceptance? Why, or why not?

Resources for *Overcoming Homosexuality*

Videos:

- *Hope for the Homosexual* (800-233-1123)
- *On Wings Like Eagles* (800-584-5630)

Books

- *Coming Out of Homosexuality: New Freedom for Men and Women* by Bob Davies and Lori Rentzel (800-233-1123)
- *Desires in Conflict* by Joe Dallas (800-233-1123)
- *Unwanted Harvest* by Mona Riley and Brad Sargent (800-233-1123)

Support Groups/Ministries

- Kerusso Ministries (757-872-8878)
- First Stone Ministries (405-236-4673)
- Exodus International (206-784-7799)

God, let her see Jesus!" Mary is living a life free of lesbianism because she received God's healing and forgiveness.

People need to know that homosexuals can be forgiven, cleansed, and delivered from a lifestyle of homosexuality through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. In addition to homosexuality's not being an acceptable lifestyle and homosexuality's being unnatural, a third answer to the question, What should my attitude be about homosexuality and homosexuals? is that Christ provides a way out of homosexuality. **Q**¹

What Will Help Someone Not Fall Back into a Homosexual Lifestyle? (1 Cor. 6:18-20)

¹⁸Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. ¹⁹Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

Men and women are ensnared in homosexual lifestyles. Homosexuals have become a powerful lobby. Homosexual men and women celebrate their lifestyle by participating in activities advocating the rights of homosexuals. They have targeted school curriculum to educate youngsters about homosexuality. The military has enacted the "Don't ask, don't tell" policy regarding sexual orientation. Television and movies are permeated with sympathetic homosexual characters. Homosexuals demand acceptance for their lifestyle. **Q**¹⁰

Christians realize that God has another plan. Christians are bought at a great price (v. 20). Christians are under the authority of Christ. God calls all believers to honor Him in lifestyle choices. Homosexuals who come to Christ can be released from the sinfulness of homosexuality. Christ can give the power to resist the temptation of homosexuality. Christians who are practicing a homosexual lifestyle can find strength in Christ to be freed from homosexuality.

How can believers resist temptation? Paul said, **Flee from sexual immorality** (v. 18). The wording

of the verse suggests that Christians are actually to run from immorality. To avoid falling back into a homosexual lifestyle, believers are encouraged to recall that fleeing is a continuous process. A strong faith in God will provide protection from slipping into old behaviors. Christians are encouraged to think of their bodies as temples of God (v. 19), recalling that God lives in us. Seeking to honor Him with our bodies is another hedge against temptation (v. 20). Another way to avoid slipping back into homosexuality is to cultivate strong friendships with loving and confrontational Christians. John 8:32 proclaims, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." Some people will want to seek professional Christian counseling. **Q¹¹**

Christians should urge those tempted toward a homosexual lifestyle to resist the temptation and seek to honor God with their lives. In addition to homosexuality's not being an acceptable lifestyle, homosexuality's being unnatural, and Christ's providing a way out of homosexuality, a fourth answer to the question, What should my attitude be about homosexuality and homosexuals? is that Christians should urge all people, including homosexuals, to live in a way that brings honor to God. **Q¹²**

Q¹¹ Are you a loving and confrontational Christian who can help a believer turn from a lifestyle of sin? How?

Q¹² How can you encourage someone to resist daily the temptation of sexual perversion? How can you keep yourself pure?

Remember:

*God condemns homosexuality
but offers homosexuals a new life
through faith in Jesus Christ.*

We must find a way to reject the sin of homosexuality and accept the person trapped in the sin. We must recall that Christ is the answer and offer hope to people entrapped in deviant lifestyles. The Bible teaches that

- God created men and women to live in His natural order
- Homosexuality is sin
- People trapped in homosexuality can be freed through Christ
- People can find ways to keep from slipping back into homosexuality

